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Memorial to Bishop
Atkinson.

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A Memorial

to

Bishop Atkinson

A MEMORIAL

—TO—

BISHOP ATKINSON

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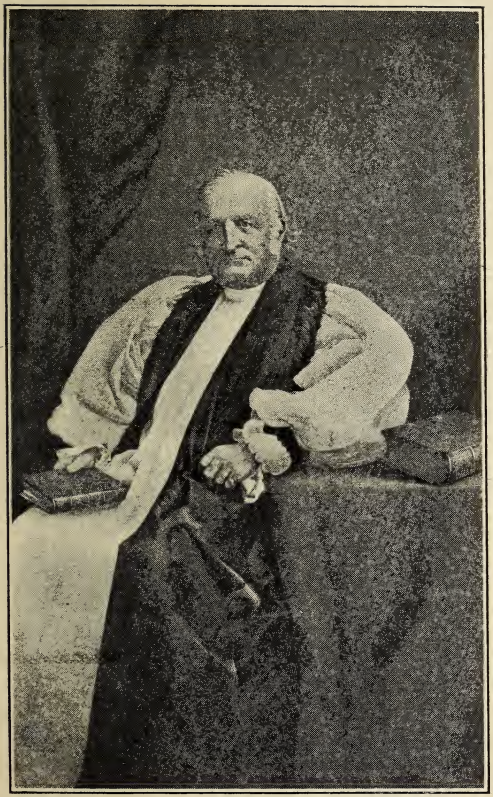

I remain yours faithfully
Thomas Atkinson

The late Rt. Rev Thos. Atkinson; third Bishop of the Diocese of North Carolina.

P11519

The accepted plan for the Church of the Holy Comforter—Bishop Atkinson Memorial.

A MEMORIAL TO BISHOP ATKINSON.

The Church of the Holy Comforter Preparing to Erect a Beautiful Stone Church in Memory of North Carolina's Greatest Bishop.

The Church of the Holy Comforter is one of the most progressive as well as the largest of the Charlotte missions. It is situated in Dilworth, the southern suburb of Charlotte, amid surroundings which encourage growth and progress. Three years ago this mission was organized by a mere handful of loyal Church people, who had made their residence in this new section of Charlotte and felt the need of the Church's ministrations not only for their own children but also for the community. Rev. Mr. Tolson, now Archdeacon of Raleigh, was put in charge of this and the other Charlotte missions and served efficient-

ly until January, 1904. Then, for seven months, followed a critical period in the life of the mission, for no ordained minister was in charge; but the continued lay service by Mr. C. E. Frick, an occasional sermon by Archdeacon E. A. Osborne and the determination of the warden and members preserved the continuity and life of the congregation and Sunday School until a minister could be secured. In September, 1904, Rev. Francis M. Osborne, then Deacon, was given the care of this place and St. Martin's Chapel. When he was ordered Priest the following March he still remained, and is now in charge of the same work.

In the fall of 1904 a notable meeting of the congregation was held and plans for work were discussed and laid out. The great need was a suitable church building, for the congregation were then and still are using a hall over a store, an "upper room"—apostolic enough to suit our historic body, but too primitive, perhaps.

A committee of good business men was appointed and collections were at once solicited for a lot.

Fifteen months from that date a $3,000 lot, measuring 150 x 150 feet, located on the principle street of Dilworth, was bought and paid for. Since that day the Building Fund has been begun and at the date of this publication has reached the sum of $2,100, a total of $5,100 raised in twenty months—not a bad result for a congregation of a little over half a hundred communicants. Of course, the members of St. Peter's, Charlotte, and other friends have generously aided in this result.

In many respects the life of the congregation has kept pace with its financial progress and the congregation has a well-organized Sunday School, a Woman's Parish Guild, an active Woman's Auxiliary, a Men's Missionary League and other helpful activities. It is their determined policy to push forward and soon take a place among the larger and stronger churches of the Diocese.

On last Whitsunday (which is observed by this mission as a parish day each year) a congregational meeting was held, just after the close of the Communion service,

to act on the suggestion of the rector, who proposed erecting this anticipated church as a memorial to the late Right Rev. Thomas Atkinson. Rev. Mr. Osborne had made this suggestion in his address that day and it met a prompt and enthusiastic endorsement from the laymen. A motion was put and carried unanimously.

The Building Committee reported that it had accepted the plans proposed by Mr. Charles C. Haight, of New York, for the stone building shown in the accompanying cut. This building is so planned that it may be built in sections. The first section, consisting of a chancel and nave, seating 150 persons, and an ample basement for Sunday school and parish purposes, will cost ten or twelve thousand dollars. This will be begun as soon as half of this amount is raised. To complete the church will double the cost of the first portion built.

The words of the rector in which the idea of erecting a memorial church was brought before the congregation are here given. They are a part of his Whitsunday ad-

dress and as containing a short sketch of the life of Bishop Atkinson may be of interest to others besides those especially addressed.

After referring to matters of local need and progress in the mission Mr. Osborne said: "We have been speaking of some encouraging things in the life of our congregation.

"Whence comes the progress upon which we congratulate ourselves? From pursuing, under the grace of God, a settled and determined policy to be something and to do something, to become a useful factor for the Church not only among our own children, in our own community, but also in the Diocese and in the general Church.

"To-day I want you to take another step that will help us to carry out this policy. I want you to take this step, but I do not want you to do so just because I desire it. I want it to be an act of yours—one you are satisfied with and in favor of. For this reason I shall present you my reasons for proposing such a step to your consideration. I

would convince you that what I am about to propose is in itself a worthy thing to do, approved not by myself alone, but also by the Archdeacon of this Convocation and the Bishop of the Diocese. I would convince you that it would be an honorable recognition of our duty to this Diocese and an opportunity of prestige of which no church in the Union has availed itself—(to my great wonder!)—in paying a debt which the whole Church in America owes to the memory of a great Christian leader and Bishop. In the meeting of the congregation which is to follow I am going to propose, have you discuss, and urge you to pass a resolution that we erect the beautiful church which we are planning to the memory of the third of the five Bishops that have guided the Church in North Carolina, the noble, the great, the beloved, the late Bishop Thomas Atkinson, D.D., LL.D.

"I can conceive of but one reason why the very suggestion of this step should not receive unanimous applause from this congregation and that is the fact that

there are among us some who have lived in North Carolina but a short while; some here who were not reared in the Episcopal Church, and some whose youth has given them no opportunity to know more than the name of this great man. If these circumstances have stood in the way of your knowing Bishop Atkinson in person or in history, will you bear with me if I lengthen this address to sketch his life and show you why your rector, the Archdeacon, and your present Bishop, as well as some of this congregation, consider his name worthy of memory—aye, more—that this is an opportunity of honoring ourselves.

"The long and useful life of Thomas Atkinson covered three-fourths of the century that has recently closed, having been born August 6, 1807, and having lived till January 4, 1881—74 years.

"As a young man he graduated with distinction at Hampden-Sidney College, in Virginia, and entered, with marked promise of success, upon the practice of law before he turned his attention to preparation for the ministry. At

the age of 29 he was ordered Deacon and the next year was advanced to the priesthood after a year's work in St. Paul's Parish, Norfolk. Later he moved to Lynchburg, Va., and still later on he was called to St. Paul's, Baltimore, to fill the place made vacant by the election of Dr. Henshaw to the Episcopate of Rhode Island. Here in Baltimore he was instrumental in the building of beautiful Grace Church, a building still standing an honor to his work and ability, wherein nearly a thousand communicants have their church home. Though he was rector of Grace Church but little over a year, so highly was he esteemed that when you go there to-day you find his name commemorated and reverenced.

"His election to the Episcopate in the Diocese of North Carolina (then the whole State) called him away from Baltimore. Our Bishop-elect was consecrated in St. John's Chapel, New York, along with Dr. Davis, Bishop-elect of South Carolina, at a session of the General Convention in the fall of 1853, a Canadian and a British Indian

Bishop joining with the American Bishops in the consecration. The fact that ere long this worthy man received honorary degrees from the University of North Carolina, Trinity College, Connecticut, and Cambridge University, England, showed that his recognition was not only diocesan, but national and world-wide.

"Now to understand the courage and strength of this man we must remember two things: The difficulties under which his Episcopate was begun and the devastation of the war which broke in upon him before the first obstacles were fairly overcome. The former difficulties were those that arose from the desertion of Bishop Ives to the Roman Catholic Church. Bishop Ives, the second Bishop of North Carolina, was in office during that period of church history known as the Catholic Renaissance, which, some said, would carry the Church of England and the American Episcopal Church bodily into the Roman Church. In England it did move for a time with power and such great men as Newman, Manning, Faber, etc., were lost to

the English Church. In the United States Bishop Ives and some others of lesser office were caught by the infection and became Romanists. Now, while in North Carolina no other minister followed in this course and no laymen except two women—one the Bishop's wife and the other a woman who afterwards returned—still such a startling event as this left the people's minds unsettled, created an impression among outsiders that the tendency of the Episcopal Church was toward Romanism; created friction among those who admired and those who condemned the decision of Bishop Ives and generally demoralized a diocese already weak in numbers (having little over two thousand communicants) and scattered over a State 500 miles long.

"But God had raised up a man for this troublesome and turbulent time. 'The (very) qualities needed for the time and circumstances were found in the new Bishop,' says the late Bishop of East Carolina. 'He was both firm and gentle, vigorous and cautious. His intellect was all the sort to command

respect of all. His power as speaker and pracher was exceptional, both dignified and genial, devout and agreeable. His views, while broad, were defined and positive. He was broad-minded and of sound judgment that came of wide knowledge and experience. In person he was noble and commanding. In his face sweetness and noble manliness were in an unusual degree combined and in his mental contact with others there was magnetism which made him respected and beloved. He was, indeed, the very man, called of God, to take up the broken lines of church work and reunite them, to restore confidence and peace, to remove doubts and suspicions that were festering in the body ecclesiastic, to bring the Diocese back to safe and quiet moorings.'

But hardly had the smoke of this battle of doctrine, faith and feeling cleared away, the wounds been healed and peace restored before the roar of civil strife filled the country with its din. The great war of North and South had begun and as the chasm marked by the Mason and Dixon line yawned

wider and wider not only was the nation, but also the Church divided into two parts—the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Confederate States and the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States.

"But let us not misunderstand the principle upon which the Episcopal Church divided North and South. It did not follow the course already marked out by the division of the Methodist Church in 1845 (!) over the question of the rights of a Methodist minister to hold slaves. It did not divide like the Presbyterians by taking sides on the question of the fugitive slave law in 1857. It was not divided upon principles of morals and politics before the war began. The Episcopal Church did not attempt to settle the questions upon which the country was in dispute.

Laymen, priests and bishops, North and South, differed widely in their views of slavery, but the unity of the Church was sacred to them. But when political separation, secession, became a fact the Southern Churchmen maintained that it carried with it ecclesiastical separation—that they had no

choice—that it was as natural as the existence of a national Church of England and a national Church in the United States. Bishops Polk and Elliott wrote a circular letter at this time in which they sum up the position of the Southern Church as follows: "This necessity does not rise of any division which has occurred within the Church itself, nor from any dissatisfaction with either the doctrine or discipline of the Church. We rejoice to record that we are today, as Churchmen, as truly brethren as we have ever been, and that no deed has been done, or word uttered, which leaves a single wound rankling in any breast.' So, when the General Convention met a year after the war began the South was not represented. The South held its own convention, adopted the name "The Protestant Episcopal Church in the Confederate States of America," drew up a constitution, published the Prayer Book with Confederate States substituted for United States, and proceeded to do the work of a national church.

"Now, one might infer that a

separation so quietly and peaceably effected might as quietly have been adjusted at the close of the war. Such an inference were true if no account is taken of human passions. But we *must* take account of human passions, for when the close of the war declared the nation undivided the chasm of separation was filled—yes, but filled with lives and fortunes and to reach across this abyss of horror and shake friendly hands would take more manliness and self-control than the great majority of human beings are capable of. Yet that was the step now necessary for a united church. The generation of that day has now almost passed away before some of our denominational brethren have been able to take the step. Would the men of the South have courage to master their passions? Would the men of the North veil their triumph?

"Was it in human power for these Southern churchmen to forget their smarting wounds? Had not Dr. Wingfield, of Portsmouth, Va., been sent to the chain gang for praying for the President of

the Confederate States, and Dr. Smith, of Alexandria, arrested for refusing to pray for the President of the United States? And were not many churches throughout the South closed by Northern arms because they used this Confederate Prayer Book? Had not the blood of a brave Bishop-General been shed upon the battlefield? Were not military *reconstruction* Governors in occupation in Southern States? The *theory* of union was as easy as that of separation, but the passions or chagrin, humiliation, anger and hate made the application of the theory a very difficult thing.

"On the other hand, Churchmen in the North had never admitted the right of the Confederate States to organize a separate convention. Bishop Wilmer had been made Bishop of Alabama by this Southern Church, with the consent of all of its Bishops but without consultation with the Bishop of the North. This was regarded as high-handed anarchy. Some even suggested a severe discipline for the traitorous (?) Southerners.

"Wounds on one hand and tri-

umph on the other made the situation a most intense and delicate one.

"But there were men in the North and men in the South who saw that the path of duty lay on the other side of these obstacles of human passion. The large-hearted Bishop Hopkins, of Vermont, sent a letter to all the Southern Dioceses assuring them of a welcome to their old seats in the Convention. But human passion was strong and the Southern men hesitated. It was easier for a triumphant North to offer hospitality than for a defeated South to accept it and so those eager for union awaited the roll call of the convention of '65 in Philadelphia with trembling dread. The roll began with Alabama but not a Southern representative answered to his name, till the secretary had passed half-way through the alphabet. Then came 'North Carolina.' Bishop Atkinson stood upon his feet to assure the Convention that there were in the South not only heroes of war but also heroes of peace—men who had the courage

to conquer self for the sake of duty and the Church.

"Another Southern Bishop, Bishop Lay, of the Southwest, also answered to his name, as well as some deputies from North Carolina, Tennessee and Texas, and all promised to move in peace and harmony. But this harmony was soon threatened from an unexpected source. A resolution was proposed that a thanksgiving service be held 'for the restoration of peace and the re-establishment of the National Government over the whole land.' These were the words of the resolution. Imagine for a moment the feelings of our great Bishop! How could he give thanks for the victory of the army of the North? It was an intense moment. All the pacific interests of the lovers of the unity were about to be dashed to pieces, it seemed. The Bishop of North Carolina was upon his feet—to rage? to storm? to resent the sting of this unwise and tactless resolution with anger and scorn? No! But with powerful self-control, with surpassing tenderness, with over-powering gentleness to offer an amendment

—'To give thanks for your victories when we prayed for another issue is a mockery—impossible! But let us hold a thanksgiving service and return thanks *for the restoration of peace to the country and unity to the Church,* and we here present and the whole South which we represent will join as heartily and sincerely as any!' The amendment was carried—the crisis passed and in the person of Bishop Atkinson and Bishop Lay the Church was once more united and all references to North and South forever settled as far as the Episcopal Church in this country is concerned. A generation of discussion, diplomacy and adjustment was averted and the great question settled once for all by the promptness, far-sightedness and courage such as that of Bishop Atkinson.

"After this convention Bishop Atkinson returned to North Carolina to restore his diocese now shattered by the war. In spite of the discouragement in the Diocese at the beginning of his Episcopate and the terrible effect of the war, in 20 years after his consecration the number of clergy had increased

25 per cent. and the communicants 100 per cent. For ten years longer, with Bishop Lyman as assistant, the apostolic man was permitted to serve his flock and to see the original number of communicants multiplied by three and the setting apart of the Diocese of East Carolina. In January, 1881, his life ended, quietly at home among his people, in the 44th year of his ministry, the 28th of his Episcopate and the 74th year of his saintly life.

"Do you ask my reasons for a proposed memorial to this man? His life is reason enough. And will other returns come to us?

"Yes. I. The sense of satisfaction in having done a worthy thing.

"II. The thanks, gratitude and sympathy and perhaps assistance of a thousand or more or those still living upon whom his hands were laid for confirmation and of those ordained to the sacred ministry at his hands.

"III. The reactive influence of the discharge of a duty to this Diocese. The memories of all of our departed Bishops are perpetuated but to this one, the greatest of all,

there is no memorial in this whole State except a dining hall and tablet at the Thompson Orphanage and some chancel furniture in St. James's Church, Wilmington.

"Do we desire to do something and to *be* something worthy of our calling? To do this worthily is a big undertaking. In the attempt we can honor ourselves. Here is an opportunity!"

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